

Washington, DC -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez welcomed yesterday's indictment of Lori Drew, a Missouri citizen, for her part in a "cyberbullying" case involving 13-year-old Megan Meier. Drew allegedly posed as a 16-year-old boy on the internet social networking site Myspace, sending Meier a series of insulting messages. Meier subsequently committed suicide. Drew has been charged with one count of conspiracy and three counts of accessing protected computers without authorization to obtain information to inflict emotional distress on the girl.

"I applaud the U.S. Attorney for this indictment fighting cyberbullying," Congresswoman Linda Sánchez said. "This case had tragic consequences, and we ought to have laws that punish the people who push kids to such extremes."

No state or federal laws directly criminalizing cyberbullying existed at the time of Drew's alleged crime. The case was filed in Los Angeles, where Myspace's servers are based.

"I am impressed with the federal prosecutor's creativity bringing these charges forward. We need to give prosecutors clearer laws they can use to go after those who engage in cyberbullying," Rep. Sánchez said. "I am hopeful the federal case will help put to rest the idea that bullying and harassment are harmless youthful pranks. Our laws do not adequately protect kids online, and that has got to change. "

Congresswoman Sánchez represents California's 39th district. She is a vocal supporter of children's online safety legislation. Since her election to Congress she has developed, and helped pass, legislation protecting children online. Rep. Sánchez is currently working to develop a bill that would allow law enforcement to prosecute those who cyberbully. She is also the sponsor of H.R. 3132, the Safe School Improvement Act and H.R. 3438, the Bullying and Gang Reduction for Improved Education Act. Both bills would ensure that schools could use existing federal funding to address school-based bullying and harassment, whether in person or online.